

History of the Wooden Fish Drum(Mo)

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Wooden Fish Drum(Mo)

- Aka “Wakeful Drum”
- Fish symbolic is a wakeful mind
 - “fish never close their eyes”
- Used for chanting sutras(Kinh)
- Other Names
 - Japan – mokugyo
 - China – muyu
 - Tibet – shingnya
 - Korea - moktak



Wooden Fish Legend

Many legends describe the origin of the wooden fish, which take place in China. One legend says that a monk went to India to acquire sutras. On his way to India, he found the way blocked by a wide, flooding river. There appeared neither bridge nor boat.

Suddenly, a big fish swam up. It offered to carry the monk across the river. The fish told the monk that it wanted to atone for a crime committed when it was a human. The fish made a simple request, that on the monk's way to obtain sutras, to ask the Buddha to guide the fish on a method to attain Bodhisattvahood(Bo Tat).

The monk agreed to the fish's request and continued his quest for seventeen years. After getting the scriptures/sutras, he returned to China via the river, which was flooding again. As the monk worried about how to cross, the fish came back to help. It asked if the monk had made the request to the Buddha. To the monk's dismay, he had forgotten. The fish became furious and splashed the monk, washing him into the river. A passing fisherman saved him from drowning, but unfortunately the sutras had been ruined by the water.

The monk went home full of anger. Filled with anger at the fish, he made a wooden drum of a fish head. When he recalled his adversity, he beat the fish head with a wooden hammer. To his surprise, each time he beat the wooden fish, the fish opened its mouth and vomited a character. He became so happy that, when he had time, he always beat the fish. A few years later, he had got back from the wooden fish's mouth what he had lost to the flood.

Wooden Fish Drum Uses

- Reciting Sutra
- Reciting Mantra
- Reciting Amitabha's name(Namu Amida Butsu/Nam Mo A Di Da Phat)
- During breathing or mindfulness practice where alert mind is key
- During rituals, including rites for death or rebirth
- In group practice, to keep people alert and in time during chanting

Wooden Fish Drum Design

- Single block of wood
 - Hand carved, hollowed out, smoothed, carved with symbols, then lacquered
- Small cushion is placed on top
 - Use to make the sound pleasant
- Wood Mallet with rubber tip
 - Used to make the sound unique

